

## U.S. HOF 2021 Inductees

### Alan Schoenberger

Mixing skis, dance and technique, Alan Schoenberger defined ballet as a World Champion, then innovated indoors for four-plus decades as an unrivaled performer, educator, coach.

Alan Schoenberger's singular path to the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame—outdoors as a freestyle champion, then indoors as a matchless stage performer, instructor, educator and coach—was shaped first and foremost by his parents. He inherited a love of dance and the arts from his mother, Eunice A. Schoenberger, a schoolteacher and dance aficionado. Meanwhile, his father, Francis X. Schoenberger, who was an IBM engineer and an accomplished skier, gymnast, figure skater and (yes!) barrel jumper, constantly led him to break barriers. The couple were living in Denver and riding the ski train to spend weekends at Winter Park when Alan was born on May 1, 1947. "They impacted me in so many ways," Schoenberger says of his parents, both now deceased. "It was my mom's dancing and my dad's...craziness."

The family eventually moved to Poughkeepsie, N.Y., but kept on skiing and dancing. After a motorcycle crash scuttled Schoenberger's desire to be a pilot, he enrolled at Utah State University in Logan in pursuit of a Fine Arts degree. He also pursued ski instructing, and that led him to introductions with the leading lights of the PSIA, including Bob Parker and Horst Abraham, who inspired him to begin a lifelong search for new teaching methods.

The idea of merging dance with skiing was always in the back of his mind, and he fortuitously found his first stage on the just-then emerging international freestyle circuit. With his mime-character "Puppet" and highly choreographed performances set to Bach rather than rock 'n' roll, Schoenberger transformed ballet and defined the discipline for three seasons. But he was hardly a one-trick pony; he also claimed second place in the combined (aerials, moguls, ballet) at the 1975 World Hot Dog Championships in Cervinia, Italy.

Another chance to perform, and to set the course for future endeavors, came in 1975, when Schoenberger was hired on by Harry Leonard and Jerry Simon to ski and dance

on an early primitive revolving carpet on the booming national ski show circuit. With an introduction from Stein Eriksen, his act brought down (most of) the house. “That carpet sucks,” observed his dad.

Thus began a never-ending quest to perfect the indoor revolving carpet or ski bed. This exercise includes varying its pitch, roll, and speed; finding the ideal carpet type (the best material was discontinued decades ago) and color (dead black preferred); aligning complex music scores and lighting; and even creating specialty skis (no edges, Teflon base plus .060-inch taping). His dad was a big part of the evolution: “I still channel him when I’m stuck,” Alan says. There were other notable supporters along the way, too, like Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, who would eventually launch a little computer company in the Bay Area and whose early colleagues were able to equip Schoenberger on the basics of controlling his ski bed via computer.

His mom’s influence also emerged, and Schoenberger sought counsel from the famed Manhattan dancer and choreographer, Merce Cunningham, who encouraged Alan to take his novel act to another level. That would lead to an astounding 1,250 live performances for his madcap, poignant show, complete with juggling and circus hijinks and reaching thousands of skiers and non-skiers alike in well more than 100 locations. The performances included tours, extended-run productions, and residencies, with an eight-year run in Stowe. Other diverse venues ranged from performing with the Rochester Philharmonic at the Eastman Theater to an audience at the 2002 Salt Lake Olympics, and from the Off Broadway Theater in Salt Lake City to the Crested Butte Center for the Arts. In *Snow Country*, Mort Lund noted that Schoenberger had created “a genre in which he is the sole and inspired practitioner,” calling him “a comet glittering across the night sky of the imagination.”

Ultimately settling in Park City, Schoenberger continued his ski teaching evolution, partnering with fellow Hall of Famer Ellen Post Foster (2016) in publishing a half-dozen books and videos, including the award-winning *Skiing and the Art of Carving*. They also created The Turning Point Foundation, a non-profit raising funds for junior ski racers in need.

He established SkiStudioParkCity to further merge his original training methods with the ever-evolving ski simulator, and his clients include a Who’s Who of racing talent,

including World Cup winner Steve Nyman. He most enjoys working with young skiers, where he can nurture the ideal carve-first technique. In 2007, Morgan Gowen came to him as a middle-of-the-pack but open-eyed 11-year-old competing in the Intermountain Division. She signed a pact to train six days a week with Schoenberger, and to focus entirely on fundamentals. Several months later, she was the J4 Division Champion.

That helped open the flood gates, and out of a cramped, 550-square-foot space in Park City, Schoenberger has a long line of racers and recreational skiers seeking his counsel. Schoenberger has much bigger dreams for the future, including launching an effort to create an expanded space in Park City to serve a variety of community needs.

In 2013, Schoenberger was inducted into the Intermountain Ski Hall of Fame. He was the first person, since his idol Alf Engen, to qualify in four of the five categories: as a Ski Pioneer, Ski Sport Innovator, Competitive Skier, and Inspirational Skier.

## **Career Accomplishments**

### **Born: May 1, 1947 (Denver)**

1969: Starts a ski teaching career at Bridgerland Ski School/Utah State Ski School that would lead him to eventually teach at Snowbird, Alta, and Sugarbush.

1975: A frequent winner in ballet, he shows all-around skills with a second place in combined at the World Hot Dog Championships in Cervinia, Italy.

1975: Begins ski bed performances for ski shows that would lead him to develop his own ski simulator and act two years later, going on to conduct some 1,250 live performances.

1976: Earns World Ski Ballet Championship.

1984-1992: *The Skiing Mime Theater* settles in Stowe, where Schoenberger performs nightly in the winter for eight years.

1992-98: Begins partnership with Ellen Post Foster that would produce instruction books and videos, culminating with *Skiing and the Art of Carving*.

2003-Present: In the carefully curated SkiStudioParkCity, Schoenberger has helped some 2,000 students, from never-evers to World Cup winners, to improve their skiing and deepen their love for the sport.

2011: Accepts Pioneer of Freestyle Skiing Award from U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame.

2013: Earns induction into the Intermountain Ski Hall of Fame in four of five categories.